

# STRANGER THINGS



**Redemption**

## Armageddon Book 3: Redemption by inktopia

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**Summary:** During the aftermath of 'The Gate' incident, an old geezer teams up with a mysterious clerk from Hawkins PD to return Eleven to her home. Meanwhile, Mike and his gang struggle to prepare for the Snowball as Hopper returns to his past to find an old ally. But during all the conundrum, Hopper has forgotten to pick up Eleven's Dress. A promise awaits. [Completed]

# 1. Reunion

*This is a rewrite of an old fic with 70% new content. Read the Author Note at the end to find the details.*

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## Redemption Chapter 1: Reunion

*'Mornings are for coffee and contemplation, and I'm not getting either'* Hopper thought and emptied the mug in one sip. Then he picked up the thermosteel flask and tilted the nozzle to pour himself another refill of stale coffee. But the container ran dry after filling only half of the mug. Hopper sighed, got up and started walking to the kitchen to make some more coffee. He was about to enter the kitchen when he noticed the door to the left of the passageway. It had remained closed since last night, and Hopper was anxious to know what was happening inside. So, he raised his hand to put a knock on the door when a voice distracted him, "Jim?"

Joyce was standing near the doorway and was staring at Hopper as if she had caught him sneaking in the school play yeard.

"I need to see my daughter," Hopper sounded frustrated enough to break the door down.

But Joyce was made from a different stock of steel than Hopper. She responded calmly, "They need more time, Jim."

"They have been in there for a long time, I'm worried."

"Worried? About what?" There was a slight tinge of mockery in her voice.

Hopper breathed hard and sputtered, "Let me get this straight. Eleven, a girl, MY GIRL, is currently in a room with a teenage boy, Mike Wheeler FOR FOUR HOURS, and no one knows exactly what they are doing."

"Jim, they waited..."

Hopper interjected, "EXACTLY. Two young teenagers who have waited a year to meet each other are locked in a room for a long time, and that doesn't concern you?"

"Yes, it does. It concerns me that they haven't had enough time to reconcile after the shit that happened last night," Joyce said in an all-knowing and calm tone.

Joyce continued, "Did you see what I saw last night, Jim?"

She raised her voice, "Did you fucking see Mike Wheeler and his faith which brought Eleven back from death?"

"Did you feel what it did to them? To that boy? What price he had to pay to bring her back? Did you see the expression on his face when he woke up?" Joyce's voice could have melted steel.

Hopper sighed as he understood what Joyce was referring to. He had seen that expression not only last night but before as well. But the only problem was that it was the first time he had seen it so severely in a fourteen-year-old boy.

Joyce came close and clutched Hopper's hand tightly. Then she whispered, "What happened last night, Jim? I have seen Will after we rescued him from that godforsaken place. But what I saw on Mike's face last night was something else."

Hopper turned his eyes away from Joyce's face because he didn't want to answer the question that was coming in his way. But Joyce had no plans for giving up. She spoke with a fervent tone, "Have you seen something like this before?"

"Yes, I have," Hopper didn't want to remember those days.

"When?"

"During the war."

"Come with me," Joyce ushered Hopper into the kitchen and put a kettle on the burner. It took her about five minutes to prepare two fresh cups of coffee. She handed Hopper a cup and sat down on a chair as he took the other chair. A few minutes passed in silence broken by nothing other than careful sips from hot cups of bitter liquid. Then Hopper started speaking in a trance.

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The Vietnam war was the deadliest conflict in the history of the United States of America since the second world war. Over fifty thousand brave soldiers lost their lives in the war, but it caused six times more damage in the form of the wounded and the broken.

Jim was a rookie back then, and he still didn't understand the full implications of War. To him, it was all about going in guns blazing and killing as many commie bastards as possible and then getting the fuck out of there before it all went to shit. After all these years he had forgotten most of the time he spent there, it was mostly the same

shit. But he clearly remembered that one day as if it was yesterday.

Jim was no longer sitting inside the Byer's residence. He was making his way through the hot and humid jungle somewhere in Vietnam. Though the weather was comparatively pleasant and Intel had cleared their path, but he was wary because the enemy was good at laying traps. They would pop up from random holes, ambush the oncoming foe and go back underground before the Americans could react. The commies had literally hollowed out entire battlefields with tunnels and used them to attack and then retreat before the enemy could return fire. Moreover, American soldiers could not fit in those tunnels because of their large frames, so they were outmaneuvered repeatedly. Thus, a certain sense of precaution was always required to operate in the battlefronts of Vietnam.

Jim was on a retrieval mission today. He had absolutely no idea what he was supposed to retrieve, it could have been a random farmer holding the location of a chemical weapon storage, or it could have been a high ranking general of the enemy army who was eager to defect. But Jim didn't question his orders.

A few hours later the team reached the destination near the base of a small hill overlooking a dense jungle. The target was a little cottage hidden in the forests, carefully camouflaged by vines and shrubs that in some places looked a bit too inconspicuous.

They set up their strategy and attacked the location at four AM in the morning, a time when humans were the least alert. The battle dragged on because the enemy soldiers were hell-bent on protecting the cottage, or whatever it contained. But the struggle ultimately went in favor of the American army and their superior firepower. At the dawn of morning, they managed to break through the enemy's defense and crushed the opposition that was guarding the cottage. Jim rushed inside and came face to face with the most pathetic situation he had ever faced in life. It was a hostage rescue, but the hostage wasn't a man, it was a beast.

The deafening sound of rotors filled the air as two shapes slowly descended on the grassy plain a few clicks from the attack site. The mission was a success, and now the team needed to evacuate before the enemy could come back to retrieve their prisoner. Jim gently lifted the shriveled figure on the stretcher and wrapped a blanket

over the shell of a man. The man was captured a long time ago and months of torture and fatigue had taken away his humanity. He could no longer speak, but he was not silent either. Jim swallowed as he regarded the man's eyes. They were hollow and had shrunk into a bottomless pit, but they cried out in inexplicable agony. The man couldn't comprehend his surrounding anymore because the same nightmares kept repeating over and over again in his head, and they clouded his eyes.

That fateful day, Jim felt scared for the first time after taking up the gun, and the memory never left him.

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"I still can't forget those eyes, Joyce," Hopper swallowed as he opened his eyes and looked at Joyce who appeared equally worried.

A few moments later, Hopper spoke quietly, "They gave it a name; PTSD; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and that's the thing you saw in Will last year. It's the inability to forget the traumas that keep haunting the patients in their dreams."

"Jim, we need to tell his parents."

"Let's wait and try to understand what happened. Don't worry, there are treatments for these conditions now and..." Hopper sighed, "...he has Eleven by his side."

What Hopper chose to omit from his narrative was that he had seen those eyes even after the war and they always left a permanent scar on the patient.

In New York, he had seen the horror in the eyes of a man who was strapped to a chair by a serial killer who proceeded to murder his wife in front of him. The man had to change his name and hide in the shadows to escape his past.

In Hawkins, he had witnessed the darkness in the eyes of a man who looked at him through the mirror, a month after Sarah's death. This man had to trudge through hell to forget his past, but they kept haunting him even now.

In Hawkins, he had felt the pain and suffering in the eyes of a woman who refused to identify the body of his son, who had drowned in the Quarry. She still carried the wound inside her heart.

And then he saw the decadence again last night in Mike Wheeler's eyes, the boy who did the impossible and brought Eleven back from certain death. But how will he cope up with whatever that could bring even grown men to their knees?

Hopper could vaguely remember the events from last night. He recalled the nightmares that he knew would chase him until the end of his life. About twelve hrs ago, Eleven somehow managed to close the interdimensional gate by using her life force to fuel her psychic abilities. But then she ran out of fuel and left Hopper without a daughter, the second time in the same lifetime. Hopper was mentally devastated but still had enough presence of mind to perform one last act of valor. He brought the cold and lifeless body of his daughter to Mike Wheeler, not because he was a sadistic bastard, but deep inside he knew that if anyone could save Eleven, it would be the boy whom she wanted to meet at her final moment.

The next hour was a blur inside Hopper's head. He remembered gently laying Eleven on the couch and then Mike taking her hand. Then perhaps an hour later the lights in the room flared like the sun and blinded him for a few minutes. Then he came back to his senses and saw Mike tightly hugging Eleven on the couch, and she was holding him in return. Hopper had no clue how that boy managed to defy the laws of nature, but he was not interested in looking at a gift horse in the mouth. There were far more pressing things that occupied his mind, like what price Mike had to pay to return Eleven into the mortal world.

When all the cuddling and promises had been made, Mike got up from the couch and slumped down on the ground. Then his eyes met Hopper's, and it shocked the veteran to the core when his memory about Vietnam was rekindled once again. What did Mike see while he was passed out, holding Eleven's cold dead hands in his own palms? What did she show him?

Hopper had some idea about Eleven's past, and he was amazed that it didn't affect her as much as it should have. Somehow, she had found a way to live with her horrors. But Mike was a typical boy, a child who had experienced a happy life in the quiet town of Hawkins. Yes, it was true that he had suffered some psychological trauma in the past related to Eleven. He had found her, saved her from her fate and

then lost her, only to find her again and almost ending up losing her forever. But then, it was nothing compared to what Eleven had been through in her life. Did she tell him everything last night somehow in their dreams?

Hopper knew that Eleven would never be able to forgive herself if she realized what she might have done to Mike last night, and that worried him a lot. But Joyce squeezed his arm and gave a confident smile, "I know what you are thinking Jim, don't worry. Mike Wheeler is a boy who believes in the impossible, Eleven is a girl who makes the impossible possible. Together they can figure things out, they will be alright. Just give them some time."

Before Hopper could voice his objection, Joyce gave a short laugh, "And no, their relationship is far beyond anything you or I can ever imagine, especially since last night. So, don't worry about them, they can remain locked in there forever and still won't do something stupid."

Joyce spoke confidently, "Let's go, we need to go to the town."

Then she literally dragged Hopper out of the house with her and locked the door behind them. Then they drove away towards the town to get supplies and news about last night.

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Behind the closed door in the Byers' residence, Mike Wheeler laid in the small bed with his eyes opened wide. He didn't want to close them. In fact, he couldn't shut them even if he tried to because he was looking at his soulmate, and it wasn't a dream.

Eleven looked beautiful, in fact, she looked like a drop of glistening water on the surface of a lotus leaf, pure and gentle at its soul. Mike could've sworn that she looked prettier than Clara, the girl who had won the Hawkins Middle School's beauty pageant three times in a row. He still couldn't believe that she was here in this room with him and they weren't dead. He shuddered at the thought of death. She went too far last time, and he nearly lost her, but then the impossible happened, and he brought her back to life by giving her a purpose to live. Mike's own voice echoed in his consciousness, "I've seen many impossibilities turning into possibilities in those ten days, I choose to believe..." and he did, and he was sure that those who were in the room last night also believed now.

Did Eleven believe? He trudged through his, no, her memories and a storm started raging inside his heart. Last night in a place beyond the reaches of time, Mike had lived through countless moments of Eleven's life. He had been there with Eleven as he touched and lived through each of her memories, all at once. He remembered the fireflies that guided him as he unraveled the mystery that was Eleven, one pinprick of light at a time. People thought Eleven was a brave girl, but they had no idea what she truly was. She had seen horrors, she had felt pain, she had lost everything over and over in the past, and she was still functioning. No, she was not only brave, but she was also the most courageous being in this entire universe. *'Does such a brave girl need someone like me in her life?'* Mike wondered.

Suddenly Eleven opened her eyes, and Mike was yanked back into reality. His throat felt dry, and for a second he forgot the world as he was dragged back into a nightmare. He remembered her pale body, pasty skin and the hollows that hid her eyes, *'she was dead.'*

Mike swallowed bile in his mouth as he realized that the nightmare was actually reality. Of course, she didn't look anything like that now. The dark and swollen veins on her face had recessed into their place and were now hidden by her skin which glowed in a healthy aura. Nancy and Joyce had cleaned her up nicely. They shampooed her hair and got rid of the strange gunk that made her look like a punk, they also took some soap to her eyes and removed that black ink that exaggerated the hollows that hid her beautiful eyes. She had changed a lot in the past year. He could finally see and appreciate the sharp features, the big eyes and the puffed lips that... *'Her lips...'* Mike wasn't ashamed to admit that he wanted to kiss her, right here, right now. But he didn't dare, not after what she's been through. *'The last thing she probably needs is a...'* Mike couldn't finish the train of thought before Eleven yanked him close and kissed him on the lips.

It was a small peck, maybe a fraction of a second more than the one in the gym, perhaps it had a fraction of more pressure and a fraction of more depth than the former, but it carried a whole lot more emotion. He was dumbfounded, but he didn't flinch at all, just like she didn't back in the gym.

Mike smiled, "I've missed you, El."

"I've missed you too, Mike," Eleven beamed a relieved smile.

Then they embraced each other tightly, and none of them wanted to let go. Mike ran his hand through Eleven's hair which was fluffy and 'Poofy,' just the way he imagined it would be. She didn't look like a boy anymore, and Mike suddenly became aware of the situation.

He had just kissed Eleven, and now she was lying in his arms, on her own bed, inside Hopper's cabin.

Hopper was very protective of his daughter, and he was a kind but a crazy bastard.

Mike had never felt that he was in so much danger as he was feeling right now. Mr. Clarke once took them on a field trip to a museum where they had a display showcasing extinct species. Mr. Clarke explained that these creatures couldn't adapt themselves to the environment so in Mother Nature's judgment they were deemed unworthy and went extinct. Humans ruled this planet because they had managed to pass every test Mother Nature could throw at them. Mike swallowed and thought, *'does Mother Nature's test include Jim Hopper?'*

Mike Wheeler had kissed and then was hugging Jim Hopper's daughter inside his own house while that maniac was probably roaming outside. Mike could clearly foresee the glass panel that the curator had used to describe dinosaurs in the museum, but it was for himself.

*Name: Mike Wheeler*

*Family: Disowned*

*Duration of existence: 14 years*

*Found in: Jim Hopper's house*

*Cause of death: Violent strangulation, blunt trauma to the head, torn limbs.*

*Current status: Extinct*

There was a knock on the door. Mike swallowed and glanced at the doorway just as the latch was turned by someone from outside. *'Damn Jedi mind-reading powers,'* he cursed inside his head and quickly let go of Eleven to prop himself on the bed.

"Mike..." there was a strange sadness in Eleven's voice. She looked hurt because she didn't know why Mike suddenly let go of her. Her eyes asked too many questions, and Mike didn't have the answers. So, he sighed and wrapped his arm around her shoulder. *'I don't care,'* he

was the one who had found her, he was the one who took care of her, and he was the one who brought her back from death. He figured that Hopper would not mind. Still, he carefully assessed all the exit options from that room.

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The door opened, and Hopper walked in along with Joyce. They looked concerned, but Mike felt that it wasn't about them and breathed a sigh of relief. Joyce came close and wrapped her arms around them, "Sweethearts," she addressed them in a motherly voice. Mike suddenly started missing his mother as he felt a longing to see her, *'it has been so long.'*

Hopper coughed and sat down beside them on a chair. Then he gently kissed Eleven on the forehead and ran his hand through her hair like he used to. Eleven cried and hugged all of them, the two most important men and one of the most important women in her life. She was home, she was happy, and she swore that she would never leave them again. Hopper looked at Mike and nodded, he knew what it had taken for Mike to bring her back and he respected his resolve. Mike was still keeping an eye on the open door, but thankfully Hopper didn't decide to discuss what the two of them were doing behind the closed door. But with wariness, Mike realized that Hopper probably knew but for some reason chose not to tear him from limb to limb, for now.

A few miles from the Byers' residence, a white parcel van smoothly cruised through the quiet suburbs of the town of Hawkins. It came to a stop near a cul de sac, and the window on the passenger side rolled down. Then a moment later, a man peered through the open window and casually observed the surrounding neighborhood.

"This the place?"

The man pulled back his head and replied to the driver, "Seems so. Do we know the name of the target?"

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A few minutes later, the men climbed out of the car in a practiced motion and made their way to the entrance of the house. They wore coveralls that matched the outfits of medical workers, but they moved in a way that resembled men who were used to living on the edge. The tall man placed a hand near his hip and felt the oblong

shape that vaguely resembled a pipe. Then he pressed the bell and asked his shorter companion, "Instructions?"

The man replied in a calm and composed manner, "Liquidate at all costs" as the door opened and a woman stepped out.

"Can I help you, gentlemen?"

"Mrs. Wheeler?"

"Yes?"

The tall man inserted his hand in the pocket.

*To be continued...*

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## **A/N:**

*Some of you had read this fic when I first uploaded this shoddy piece of work. To bring it in line with the quality of my other works, I am doing a complete rewrite with 70% new material and concepts. A few questions escaped us last time, who forged the birth certificate? Who convinced Owen to come to Hopper's rescue? What happened to Bob's memories and most importantly, how did Jopper reignite? This new fic will answer all these questions and then some.*

## 2. Revelation

### Redemption Chapter 2: Revelation

The tall man inserted his hand inside his pocket to retrieve the silenced Glock 17, the latest in the line of semi-automatic pistols in the market. They had clear instructions to take out their target irrespective of collaterals, and they were very proficient in their job.

"We are here to see, umm..., " the short man looked at the fake ledger in his hand and continued, "... Mike Wheeler. Is he in?"

Karen replied, "He's out right now. May I ask why you're looking for my son?"

The tall man halted his hand at the edge of the pocket and sighed, maybe he could come back later and finish the job and pass it along as collateral. He was eager to try out his new arsenal, and a suburban neighborhood would be the perfect test for a silenced weapon. But the short man was in charge, he replied, "We are from the local hospital. A student in your son's class was diagnosed with measles. We are trying to identify exposure radius," the man took out an id.

"Ohh. Well, he's probably at..." Karen couldn't finish her sentence as something on the far end of the road caught her attention. The two men suddenly became tensed and peered over their shoulders to see a police cruiser entering the one-way street. The vehicle smoothly rolled the few dozen meters and parked behind the parcel van.

Two cops exited the vehicle and started strolling towards the entrance of the Wheeler house. The tall man still had his hand gripped around the Glock inside his coverall, but the short man glanced at him with a stare that said, *'Hold.'*

Two middle-aged cops from a sleepy town were no match for two professional hitmen, but the target might be warned. Priorities came first. The police reached the driveway and called out, "Mrs. Wheeler?" It was a small town, and people knew most of the other residents. Karen recognized the officer and replied with a concerned tone, "Powel? What's going on? Is Mike okay?"

"He's fine. Will suffered an accident last night, Mike's with him right now at..." Powel stopped speaking and stared at the two men standing in front of Karen.

She noticed them and talked in a hurry, "These gentlemen are from

the local hospital. Something about a measles outbreak. Now, where's Mike?"

The short man held up the id and assured the officers, "Just a routine job. We're trying to find the extent of a possible measles outbreak."

Powell came close to take a better look at the badge. He confirmed the identities of the two professionals and remarked, "He's at Hopper's place. It's near the..."

The short man smiled and spoke, "We know where chief Hopper lives. We'll check up with him. Thanks for the help gentlemen."

Then the two of them walked to their van and drove away in an unhurried pace.

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A few miles away in a cabin hidden in the forest, Mike, Eleven, and Joyce were chatting about their latest adventures. Hopper lighted a cigarette and reclined on the chair that looked like it could break down at any moment. Then he took out a piece of paper from his pocket and laid it down on the bed in front of Eleven. The article was old, and the ink was smudged; however, Mike could barely figure out a few lines written on the paper. Yet, he had a hard time making sense of the three lines that looked like strange declarations.

But Eleven knew them, and her face went pale at the sight of the paper. She buried her face in Mike's shoulder and clutched him tightly and started sniffing. Before Mike could demand an explanation, Hopper picked up the paper and ripped it to shreds.

"No more rules," Hopper spoke in a clear tone, "You've grown up, both of you. I don't believe you need rules anymore, Eleven. But I'd expect the two of you to take care of yourselves, and to take care of each other."

Eleven nodded while still hiding in Mike's shoulder. Mike had no idea what they were talking about. But whatever it was, Eleven had come to terms with it, and Mike wasn't eager to dig too deep into their personal lives, yet.

"We went to the town this morning," Hopper took a breather and looked at Joyce.

She picked up the trail, "Apparently, every light in every house came alight last night, twice. And the second time it nearly blinded everyone. Some are saying that it happened to the cars, the flashlights, the toys, even to the radios. They are blaming everything

on the lab," Joyce chuckled.

*'That's amazing,'* Mike thought. Earlier, Eleven could only affect the lights that were at a small distance around her, but now... oh, *'that's horrible.'* He recollected the time he had spent living Eleven's memories and realized that it must have hurt a lot to engage her powers to that level. *'You won't have to do it again,'* Mike thought as he gently moved his hands down Eleven's back to comfort her.

Hopper noticed but didn't object, he continued, "But I have some good news."

He handed them a newspaper whose headlines spelled the doom of Hawkins National Laboratory, something regarding a chemical leakage and the death of Barbara which was covered up by the lab. Both Mike and Eleven stared at the paper as if they couldn't believe their eyes. After all the pain, the hardships and the suffering, HNL was taken out by Barb's death? It was a dream too good to be true. But then Mike looked at Eleven's eyes and had the sudden epiphany that she had just lost her home of thirteen years. It was true that HNL was a nightmare to Eleven, but at the end of the day, it still provided her shelter and some comfort when she woke up. Mike gently whispered to Eleven, "It was a prison El. You don't need to live in a prison, you can come to stay at my house..."

"Ahem..."

Mike blushed and immediately changed his speech, "...Hopper. I mean you can stay here, and I'll come to visit."

Joyce couldn't hold it anymore and started laughing. In a few seconds, the rest of them joined her too.

"The threat isn't over yet. Someone might have seen Eleven in the lab last night. Lay low while Joyce and I figure things out," Hopper stopped laughing and spoke in a firm tone.

Joyce praised his confidence. She knew that Hopper was a good father when it was forced onto him. But when he took the responsibility upon himself, then he could become the best guardian any child could ever hope for, a bit rough on the edges though.

"You two get some rest, we'll be right back," Joyce noticed Mike's drooping eyelids and decided to leave.

"What about Lucas, Dustin? And where's Will?" Mike was concerned about his friends, especially Will, who almost died last night.

Hopper explained, "They left this morning. If too many people who

were involved in the entire thing last year went missing at the same time, then it would bring up a lot of uncomfortable questions."

"But Will..."

Joyce smiled and assured Mike, "He's with Jonathan and Nancy. Don't worry, he'll be up in no time."

"Okay. Did anyone call my mom? Please don't tell her about Eleven."

"Jim took care of that. You're in my house now, looking after Will," Joyce got up to leave. Hopper was right at her tail, but then he stopped at the doorframe and spoke in a low voice, "I'm sorry for everything Mike. I had to do it to protect my daughter. I don't expect you to understand, and I don't expect you to forgive me either. But I've already lost a part of my soul, I would sacrifice my life to save the last part," then he mumbled something and closed the door behind him.

That felt totally awkward, but what intrigued Mike more was the part Hopper mumbled just before leaving the room. It almost sounded like, "...or the soul that returned her to me." Mike was thinking about what Hopper really wanted to say when he felt a soft hand on his cheek. He returned her gaze to the outside world and found Eleven looking straight into his eyes. Now was not a good time to bring up last night, so Mike started talking about all the things he had done in the previous year to find Eleven. She held onto his hands and kept listening with utmost attention.

Mike was describing how he desperately kept searching for Eleven in the woods on the eleventh night after her disappearance.

Eleven nodded, "I found you in the trees that night, it was so cold, and you were so stiff."

Mike remembered that cursed night and shivered at the thought of the cold tendrils of air seeping his life force away from him. He was sure that Eleven saved him that night but what about the previous night? How did he manage to protect her from the deathly cold without even being in the forest in the first place?

"Umm, the night before," Mike coughed, "I remember saving you. I don't know how."

Eleven flashed a big smile, "I do. You walked into my dream."

*'Holy shit,'* Mike was about to shout, but then he recalled last night and swallowed his voice. Walking into Eleven's dream wasn't new nor a one-time event, it's the exact same thing he did last night to save

Eleven from her fate. Somehow what Mike did inside Eleven's mind affected her physical self, in the first case, it saved her from the freezing cold, and this time it saved her from death. But he was frightened about how deep that bond truly went.

"I did the same thing that you did to me the other night." Eleven was still speaking, "I took off your jacket, slept with you and helped you get warm." Mike gave a dry laugh, "I knew it was you. You found the bag?"

Suddenly, Eleven's eyes went wide, "I... I am sorry. I lost your bag."

"It doesn't matter. You got the food?"

Eleven smiled, "I liked the food in the bag, Mike. I was so hungry, I had no food. I thought of going to the Eggo store, but the bad men were in your home," she shivered and held Mike tightly.

Eggo store? Did she mean the supermarket? Mike needed to have a conversation with her regarding the monetary value of objects. He quickly did a mental calculation about the money required to feed her Eggos every day and came up short. *'Gonna have to break Nancy's box again,'* Mike stifled a laugh.

"Hopper was putting food for me, in a box. I didn't take your food, I was afraid that the bad men will find you, I am sorry."

Mike's hand traced a path along Eleven's face. "I know," it was all he could say.

Then suddenly Eleven wrapped her arms tightly around Mike's neck and buried her face in his chest as she cried out, "You went to that place, where those Mouth-breathers tried hurting you."

Mike realized that she was talking about the quarry where he almost lost his life before Hopper came to rescue. Somehow, she had felt him and the danger he was in and sent Hopper to save him. So, the feeling Mike had inside the classroom on that fateful day wasn't just a dream, Eleven had somehow managed to peer inside his mind even when he wasn't asleep.

"I couldn't save you when you were falling in the lake, I am sorry," Eleven kept sobbing with her head still buried in Mike's chest.

Mike could only console her because he didn't know what to say. *'Only if I could somehow erase that night from my memory,'* then he smiled absently and thought, *'NO, that night was needed for me to survive.'*

It was on that fateful night when Hopper told Mike that he also believed that Eleven was alive. *'That bastard, playing with a child's emotion.'* But that statement comforted him and the rest of the year was easy to trudge through. Without that night, he had nearly given up on Eleven.

They continued talking about all the things they had seen over the last year. Mike spoke about the new mall that was coming up, but Eleven's only interest was whether it would have an Eggo store or not. Mike made another mental note to feed Eleven actual food because surviving only on Eggos was probably not healthy. There were too many things he had planned to do with Eleven when she came back, and the list just kept getting longer. He needed to put them all in a paper, but first, he needed to say something to her.

"Eleven? I want to ask you something," Mike swallowed and spoke as if he was about to ask something complicated for the girl sitting in front of him.

Eleven felt concerned and replied, "Yes?"

"Do you want to go to the Snowball with me?"

*'Deja vu,'* Mike thought and shivered as he remembered the last time he had asked this question to his soulmate. He tried very hard to forget the memories that followed, but some nightmares were almost impossible to escape from.

"A THOUSAND TIMES YES," Eleven shouted and hugged Mike tightly, this was her answer. Mike's eyes watered as he realized how much he had missed her and he promised to himself that no matter what happened, he would take Eleven to the Snowball with him.

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"... blood pressure's slightly elevated, heart rate's normal. Looks like the surgery was a success. You'll make a quick recovery," the nurse smiled as she finished filling the chart and attached it back to the end of the bed.

Dr. Owens laughed and replied, "But what about my football career?"

"That's gonna take some time. Meanwhile, you can watch the game here," the nurse turned the TV on and left the room after handing Dr. Owens the remote.

But as soon as the nurse left, Dr. Owens switched to the news channel and carefully started noting all the developments from last night. Apparently, the lab was completely destroyed from the inside, and

only the structure remained, a reminder of the horrors contained within its wall from a past era. They were linking it back to the death of a local resident named Barbara. But what happened to the girl who saved the world? Dr. Owens reached for the needles in his arms to take them off but stopped when he noticed the door being slowly opened from outside.

A moment later, Joyce Byers walked into the room by herself. She slowly walked to the bed and addressed the elderly patient, "Hey doc. How're you holding up?"

Dr. Owens couldn't help but feel a bit surprised at the bravery of the woman standing in front of the man who was partly responsible for the tragedy that almost took the life of her son. He replied, "I'll live. What happened to your son?"

"He's doing fine, the parasite left his body," Joyce visibly shivered as she recounted the struggle from last night.

"That's fantastic, I am so glad that he's okay."

"I am not here because of Will, I am here because of ..."

Dr. Owen's interjected, "Eleven. I know."

Now it was Joyce's turn to be surprised, she spoke quietly, "She's okay now, but she almost died last night."

"Almost?"

"You know? How did..."

"I know more than I let on Mrs. Byers. And please, believe me, I want nothing more than the best for Jane Ives," Dr. Owens sighed and looked at the only window in the room. The room was on the third floor, and from her chair, Joyce could see a park where a couple of kids were playing. She also noticed a few mothers who were sitting on benches and keeping close eyes on their children.

Joyce took a moment to digest Dr. Owen's statement. Then she braced herself and objected vehemently, "Doc. You can't take her back. YOU CAN'T!"

Dr. Owens returned his gaze to Joyce and assured her, "I don't want to, Mrs. Byers. I really don't, but I am not so sure whether Hopper can take good care of her."

"But he's her FATHER."

"He doesn't know a fraction about her past, he doesn't know what she was being prepared for, HE DOESN'T KNOW WHO'S COMING FOR HER," Dr. Owens banged his fist on the bedside table.

"No he doesn't, but he knows what her future holds," Joyce took a photo from her wallet and handed it to Dr. Owens.

It was a memory from last night. Dr. Owens carefully observed the photograph which showed Mike and Eleven tightly holding each other on a torn couch inside what he presumed was Hopper's cabin. The lights in the cabin were slightly brighter than usual, but most of the people standing around Mike and Eleven had their hands covering their eyes as if the flaring lights had blinded them a moment ago. However, Hopper had his arms at his side as he was looking at his daughter, Dr. Owens could feel the raw emotion from his posture.

"Jonathan took that photo last night, after Mike..." Joyce swallowed and continued, "...somehow brought Eleven back from death."

Dr. Owens was still looking at the photograph as if he was transfixed, then he laid it down on the bed and looked at Joyce in her eyes. Next, he calmly requested, "Tell me everything that happened last night. Don't leave out anything even if it doesn't make any sense."

"I thought you knew what happened."

Dr. Owens replied, "I do. But I need to hear it from a mother's perspective."

---

A few hours later, the telephone inside a small house situated somewhere in Hawkins started ringing loudly. An elderly woman, sitting a few meters away from the phone, was inspecting the image of a driver's license with a magnifying glass. She sighed with irritation and walked to the phone to pick it up.

"Hello?"

A voice echoed through the receiver, "This is Owens."

The woman immediately stood up straight as if the owner of the voice was standing right in front of her. She clutched the receiver tightly and spoke, "Doc? You're alive? Oh, thank God."

"I'm okay. Hopper saved me last night. What have you found?"

"Alright, it's back to business then," the woman picked up the driver's license and read the name on the speaker.

"John Hammond, apparently the resident of Wyoming..."

"It's fake," Dr. Owens cut her off and replied a second later, "Most probably one of the covers used by the MkUltra assets. Guess who just decided to make his first move?"

The woman gritted her teeth and replied, "The bastard's back."

"Is there a contact point?"

"I am not sure. I do have a possible location and time for contact."

Dr. Owens noted down the details on a piece of paper and then asked, "I want you to do something for me."

"Anything Doc, anything for you."

"Dig into Hopper's background and find information about a particular mission he had carried out back in 'Nam."

The woman was curious, she asked in return, "What's this about?"

"I want to follow-up on something Mrs. Byers just told me."

"Give me the details."

The woman wrote down the names on a piece of paper and asked the last query, "Why do you want this information, Doc? Was the chief somehow involved with MkUltra back then?" She sounded concerned.

"No, but perhaps I owe him not only one but two favors," Dr. Owens chuckled and continued, "Now excuse me while I delay the bastards. Talk to you soon."

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About a mile from Hopper's cabin, a white panel van was cruising in an unhurried pace through the road bordering the forest. The passengers had already switched out of their medical coveralls and were now wearing sleek hiking gears. The terrain in front was rough, and they had received reports about the background of the police chief. While most people would dismiss Hopper as a local drunk, the two professionals had enough experience in dealing with Vietnam veterans, and they had taken every precaution possible. A few hundred meters away, a telephone booth caught the driver's attention, and he slowed the car to a halt. Then the short man got off the car, walked to the booth and waited for a few minutes after which the phone started ringing. Following a few minutes of intense conversation, he returned to the car and instructed the driver to turn around.

"The Boss sure sounded weird today."

"What's this? We're aborting?" The driver wasn't amused.

"No, the target is with Subject 11. We can't engage now."

"But she's just a kid."

The passenger closed his eyes and sighed, "Boss's orders. We need to find the target when he's away from the subject. Preferably alone."

"And how're we getting that info?"

The passenger smiled as he peered through the dusty windshield, "You have never been to a school in the states, have you?"

---

About thirty minutes later, the telephone inside the mysterious house rang again and was answered within three seconds, "Doc?"

"Yeah, it's me. Our guests are off the Chief's trail for now. So, what can you tell me about the mission?" Dr. Owens sounded eager.

The woman sighed, "Not much, I only have the date and the objective, my source couldn't get the name of the target."

She read out the date and objective of the mission, then she stopped speaking and waited for her instructions. A few minutes passed, but there was no response. The woman could hear Dr. Owens breathing heavily through the speaker, and she also felt as if he was crying silently.

"Doc, you okay?"

Suddenly Dr. Owens replied, "I am okay. Thank you, thank you for everything."

The woman felt if the gratitude not just for her but for someone else. She still acknowledged, "Don't mention it Doc. We're in this together."

"I need you to do one more thing for me..." Dr. Owens paused for a moment and added, "... No. For Eleven!"

The woman spoke without hesitation, "Anything."

"Tell me, Flo, how good are you in forging birth certificates?"

Flo, the secretary working in Hawkins PD was respected and loved by almost every resident in the small town. She was quite well known for her calm and composed demeanor and her ability to provide advice even during the darkest hours. But behind her affable nature lied a past that only a few people in the world were aware of. Almost two decades back, Florence Summers was one of the most brilliant analysts CIA had ever recruited. She could detect forged documents with just a glance and was very proficient in making sense out of random events that connected to a bigger picture in the background. Then one day a phone call shattered her world and sent her on a one way trip to Hawkins, where she met Dr. Owens, a person who was trying to achieve the same objective as her; to free Eleven from Martin Brenner's grasp.

Flo laughed as she realized where the conversation was heading and spoke confidently, "Not even the issuer would be able to tell if it's fake. I'll get right to it. I take it that the Chief's the father?"

"Yeah. And keep Terry as the mother."

"Owens?"

"Yeah, Flo?"

"What changed? During our last conversation, you said you wanted to take her away from the chief. You thought he won't be able to protect her from Mar...tin," Flo gritted her teeth as she uttered the name of the man she hated from her guts.

Dr. Owens calmly replied, "I owe him one more favor."

*To be continued...*

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**A/N**

Hey guys, I am writing at full pace now, and something exciting is coming your way; a mileven fic that is beyond the reaches of space and time. It's going to be unique and completely different and would start airing in a day or two. I am feeling extremely excited about this new AU, and I know you guys will love it too.

The sneak peek of the new story is posted in my IG: inktopia resurrect, and I haven't forgotten the Tumblr folks, I have made an account there too. I would start updating there soon as well.

### 3. Resolution

#### Redemption Chapter 3: Resolution

Almost a month had passed since that fateful night that had taken a heavy toll on certain residents of Hawkins, Indiana.

Somewhere in the downtown, a young man lifted the shutter of a small store and stepped in through the side gate to take up position behind the counter. He turned around and found his first customer standing on the other side of the counter; she was a woman in her middle ages, with dark brown hair and a deep sorrow masking her graceful face.

"Good morning ma'am. How can I help you today?"

The woman looked up and saw the young man and smile sadly, "No. It's nothing. I have... had a friend who used to work here."

The store clerk thought about something and then asked, "Are you by any chance, Joyce Byers?"

"Yes. I am Joyce," the woman was clearly surprised.

"Just a second ma'am," the clerk bent over to find something and came back up a moment later with a small box. He held the package towards Joyce and spoke, "Found this box in the counter with your name on it."

Joyce received the box and opened the note attached to it, *'Happy Birthday, Sweetheart. I know there's not much poor old Bob can give you but maybe this will help save our memories.'*

Joyce ripped the package with shaking hands and found a brand new camcorder inside. She started sniffing, and the clerk got concerned,

"Ma'am. Is everything okay?"

"NO," the woman shouted and raised the camera in her hands to throw it down, but her hand never completed the full swing. It was caught by another hand. Joyce turned and saw Hopper standing beside her with a compassionate smile. He spoke softly, "Joyce. You can't erase memories like this. I have tried."

"THEN WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO FUCKING DO?"

Hopper hugged Joyce and whispered, "Wait for better days."

A few hours later, after accompanying Joyce to her home, Hopper walked into a small but reputed cafe called Elma's. It was already

getting quite cold outside, and as a result, the cafe was witnessing a surge of customers. Hopper looked at the TV and read the headline; *"The military has completed the total shutdown Hawkin's lab and are building a perimeter around it. The site is still highly toxic and can be lethal to trespassers. Now we will speak to Mr. Murray..."*

Things had been moving too quickly in the last few weeks with the lab being shut-down and military leaving the town at the dead of the night after the force commandos deployed inside were chased out by the high toxicity levels, but Hopper knew what was locked inside. He was worried about the gate and also what it meant for both Eleven and her friends. Only one thing that comforted him was that Mike Wheeler was with his daughter. The thought gave him confidence now, but earlier it used to invoke a strange sense of jealousy. He had always expected this day to come even before Sarah was taken from him, but having to face it now, he wasn't sure if he was ready to relinquish the responsibility of his daughter to someone else. A few seconds later, Hopper briskly walked to the table where an old face waited.

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Nancy was sitting quietly in her room and going through some old photographs taken more than a year ago. These photos brought out old memories, old but no longer painful. She could see Barb finally smiling from the pictures. It didn't give her the complete closure that she needed, but she could finally look at Barb's parents in their eyes. Nancy Wheeler could finally look at herself in the mirror. Suddenly there was a ruckus outside, and something crashed into her door. Nancy turned around and saw Mike running inside the room at full speed and being followed by Dustin who carried an orange colored tie in her hands.

Mike ran to his sister and shouted, "Help. He wants to put that tie on me."

Dustin breathed and shouted back, "This tie'll look beautiful on you."

"NO," Lucas ran in with a yellow tie, "He's going yellow."

Will was right behind them, he entered and shouted, "I say let's tie him up and deliver to the snowball."

Nancy laughed and shielded her brother from the oncoming attacks. She winked at her brother and spoke, "Not those. I have a different

color tie for him."

"WHAT?" Mike stared at his sister and felt the terror as she captured him and dragged him to the cupboard.

A few minutes later Mike found himself sitting on Nancy's bed, wearing the full suit for the Snowball more than six hours before the event.

Dustin measured him from the side and remarked, "Straight to the table, Waiter."

Will and Lucas were giggling nearby. Nancy stifled a laugh and comforted Mike, "Don't listen to them. You look handsome. I'm sure you'll turn a lot of heads tonight."

Dustin smirked, "Eleven heads... or Eleven's head to be precise."

Lucas and Will cooed from behind, and they all burst into laughter as Mike kept turning fifty shades of red around the cheeks.

"Okay guys, go home and get ready, your parents will drop you at the School tonight and Dustin?" Nancy addressed the group that was about to leave the room.

"Yeah?"

"Steve is going to pick you up tonight, something about Fara..."

"Yeah yeah. I know," Dustin interjected and blushed as he walked out, leaving Nancy puzzled for a few seconds. Then she turned to Mike and called him, "Come here. You need to practice."

"Practice? I don't need..." Mike opened his mouth to object, but Nancy shushed him, "You are a pathetic dancer. No way I am letting my brother make a fool out of himself tonight."

---

Right about then, Hopper was returning to his cabin with a fluttering heart, and he was sure that he was probably experiencing a heart attack. He checked his pocket for the umptieth time to reassure himself that the envelope was really there. That white piece of a seemingly useless document contained the birth certificate of Jane Hopper, erstwhile known as Eleven to the outside world. Hopper had no idea how that old geezer managed to get his hands on this document and feed the data back into federal systems, but as mentioned earlier, he never questioned a gift horse in the mouth. Hopper had been carrying it with him for the last couple of days because he was afraid to let go of it. Then he finally reached home and parked the car outside his doorway.

After a brisk walk, he arrived at the door and proceeded to put a knock on it. But his hand hit air as the door was slowly opened by someone from inside. Hopper took a few reluctant steps and entered the room as the door automatically swung shut. He found Eleven standing in front of the TV with a look of anticipation in her eyes, "Dad?"

Hopper sighed and sat down on the sofa to prepare for the storm, "No, no and no."

He suddenly became wary and counted the number of objects that might get broken tonight. The glass panes, the sofa, the bookshelf, the tables, in fact, looking from Eleven's perspective, the entire house was almost entirely expendable. It was a good idea that he had purchased some second-hand furniture because they won't probably survive the night.

"There are agents in the town, the threat is not over. If we go through this, I'm not sure what will happen to either of you," Hopper was sure that he was making sense, he was also convinced that the bookshelf would be flying out of the window any second now.

But then he looked at the cabinet behind Eleven that contained a newly developed medicine to help her with her hemorrhage and felt relieved, that old geezer sure came handy.

"But you promised," Eleven looked sad instead of furious.

"I'm sorry, kid. Listen, we go through this night, and I'll personally take you to his house. You can spend the night there. Hell, you can spend the week there."

"But I promised, he promised." Eleven understood, but she had made a promise to Mike.

"And I promised that I'll protect both of you, please understand."

"I... He'll be waiting for me," Eleven was pleading, but Hopper wasn't ready to back down.

"I'm sure he'll understand, he wouldn't want you to come."

Hopper was getting a headache. He wished Eleven would explode now so the storm would pass before the Snowball started. But it didn't happen the way he had expected. Instead, Eleven went to her room and slammed the door behind her.

Hopper groaned but felt that today was a good day because nothing broke, except the heart of his teenage daughter. Maybe he could kidnap Mike Wheeler, get a couple of disco lights and set up the

Snowball inside the cabin. *'It won't be such a bad idea,'* Hopper chuckled at that thought. Suddenly there was a knock at the door that unsettled him. He became tense because he wasn't expecting a visitor at this hour. With some wariness, he went to the door and opened it slowly with a gun cocked in his hand. But then his jaw dropped when he saw the figure standing there with a smile on his face.

The man spoke, "You wouldn't let an old man freeze to death in the cold, would you?"

"Just because I told you where to find us, doesn't mean you get to come uninvited," Hopper declared as Dr. Sam Owens barged his way inside and ran towards the sofa. Hopper was still trying to understand what had happened when the old man reached there and sat down comfortably and spoke, "I'm getting old, but you're getting senile. Where's Eleven?"

"She's inside, and she's safe and secure. She's not bleeding from her nose, so she doesn't need you tonight."

Dr. Owens thought *'Short-sighted people.'*

Then he responded in a gentle voice, "When you asked me about one night, I didn't get it initially, but then I thought what was so special about tonight?"

"And?" Hopper was a bit curious.

"And then, I saw this big poster outside the school, Snowball."

"So?" Should Hopper trust this man? He had every reason to and also not to.

"I got the agents called off, they're now searching for Eleven in Atlanta. Apparently, someone tipped them off about a telekinetic girl who is searching for her mother there." Dr. Owens smiled as if he was extremely pleased with himself.

"How did you know about the Snowball?"

"Listen, Jim. I've been doing this far too long. Did you forget that I have a degree in Psychiatry?"

Hopper wasn't amused, he enquired, "Why, why are you doing this?"

"Who did you want to become when you were a child?" Dr. Owen's bent forward to grab a newspaper from the table. For a moment he didn't look like an old geezer anymore.

"Huh?" Jim was taken aback.

"Well, that's a question for you, Mr. Police officer."

"I... that's none of your business!"

Dr. Owens sighed and replied, "I wanted to be a superhero, like Superman. And then, after all these years, I finally met him," he lifted the newspaper to his face, and Hopper saw a eulogy posted at the corner of the front page; a small article that Joyce and Hopper had paid for.

*'In remembrance of Bob Newby!'* Hopper felt a pain in his heart as he read the title. That brave man was still taking care of them, even from his grave.

"I made a decision that day, Jim. I decided to become a hero. I don't need to fly, I don't need to prowl the streets in the middle of the night. I can help in other ways," Dr. Owens put down the newspaper and turned his head around to stare into Hopper's eyes.

"You want to know why I care? You want to know why I'm doing all this?" Dr. Owens looked like a ghost, his eyes flickered once and became still as it traced a memory from the past.

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"My son had a brilliant mind from early childhood." Dr. Owens started digging into a dark memory from the depths of his soul. Hopper suddenly had a sinking feeling in his stomach. He grabbed two beers and sat down on the couch beside the old man.

"I never listened to him Jim, never. He wanted to be free, he wanted to explore the world. But I was too afraid of losing him the same way I had lost his mother. So, I literally locked him in the house. Oh, he had the best teachers, the best food, the best books, the best clothes, but he was still a flightless bird in a golden cage."

Hopper handed Dr. Owens a bottle of beer. It was all making sense now, how that old geezer tried his best to help Will and Eleven but was that the only reason?

"The CIA got to him at an early age. Recruited him straight out of college. Before long he was running ops in Vietnam."

Hopper had a crushing feeling inside his heart as the dreadful forests of a battleground flashed in front of his eyes. *'PTSD, it never leaves you alone, huh?'* Hopper thought but didn't respond, he let the old man continue.

"He was doing great, Jim. He was leading his country into victory, then one day they got him. They made an example out of him to teach a lesson to their enemy. They tortured him so much that he was nearly dead," Dr. Owens closed his eyes.

*The booming sound of rotors filled the air as two shapes slowly ascended from the grassy plain a few clicks from the attack site back in Vietnam. Sitting inside his battered cabin in Hawkins, Hopper kept staring at the choppers as they slowly faded into the distant horizon over the canopies of the dense forest. He was satisfied with the outcome of the mission, but he never got to know the name of the brilliant CIA operative whom he rescued from his prison all those years ago.*

Dr. Owens was still speaking in a trance, "Oliver returned home after six months, but it took six years for him to return to normal. Normal as in he could sleep without screaming in his nightmares. He didn't remember much about what had happened to him, or how he was saved. But he remembered a face, a kind yet angry face, who unshackled him from his prison and returned him to his homeland." Dr. Owens finally stopped, his eyes were shimmering.

Hopper addressed his fallen comrade in a kind voice, "How's he doing?"

"He's dead. But he died peacefully in his home."

Hopper nodded, "I'm sorry Owens, I didn't know..."

"Forget it, you rescued him from hell, and that's the only thing that matters," Dr. Owens smiled but then became serious, "Jim, do not make the same mistakes I had made. Eleven is a brilliant girl, she's an angel. But she has a ferocious power rummaging inside her soul, waiting patiently to save or end the world. There is no cage that can contain her power," Dr. Owen's voice boomed across the cabin.

"Then what should I do?" Hopper pleaded because he was entirely out of ideas.

Dr. Owens gently inserted his hand inside his pocket and brought out an envelope, then he opened the flap and took out two photographs and laid them on the table side by side. The first photograph was familiar, it was taken on the night Mike Wheeler had returned Hopper's daughter to him. But the second photograph was a relic of the past. It was a grayscale print taken inside a hospital room; in that room, Terry Ives was sitting on a wheelchair holding a baby in her arms. Beside her, a few people were standing and smiling at the camera. Hopper didn't know most of them except two. First, he could recognize Dr. Owens but with light gray hair and a huge grin plastered on his face. And on the other side stood a woman who was

vaguely familiar but it was impossible to think that his secretary, Florence was somehow involved with MK-ULTRA back then.

Dr. Owens spoke in a low tone, "The past and the future. We've shielded Teresa and her daughter from their fate for over a decade, and now we've passed the torch to Mike and his friends. Why can't you do the same? Why can't you trust the future?"

Hopper was dumbfounded and couldn't say anything.

"I took care of the Agents tonight, I still have certain connections in the CIA as well as the Pentagon. I'll do what is required to protect her from forces that are within my control."

"But..." Hopper sensed the next sentence coming his way.

"There are forces that you or I cannot control. But maybe someone else can," Dr. Owens tapped his finger on the photograph which showed Mike hugging Eleven and all their friends standing around them and grinning as if they've witnessed a miracle.

Dr. Owens proceeded with his request, "Take her to the Snowball, Jim. She deserves to be with her friends, the ones who would be able to protect her far better from herself than you and I ever could. Do the same thing you had done for my son all those years ago. SET HER FREE!"

Hopper finally gave up. In fact, he was feeling rather pleased with how the night was turning out to be, perhaps he could still keep his promise. He looked at Dr. Owens and thought, *'Empathy, a little bit of compassion could go a long way.'*

Then a moment later, Hopper jumped up and started pacing the room. He looked like a tiger that was caged and put up for display in a zoo.

"Jim? Don't you have to take your daughter to Snowball?"

"I forgot to buy her a dress." Hopper's voice was strained, "Good lord, I forgot to buy her a dress."

Dr. Owens grinned and threw a package towards him. Hopper snatched it from the air and felt the weight, it was quite light and soft.

"As I told you, I sometimes impress even myself," Dr. Owens gave a hearty laugh, and Hopper started laughing too.

***Continues in Arc IV: Unsheathed***

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**A/N**

This is the fic where I played around with Hopper and Dr. Owen's pasts and then linked them together. In fact, I wanted to name this chapter as 'Full Circle,' but that didn't sync with the other titles. Next up is Unsheathed and as you can guess from my recent spree of remodeling, I'm going to take it apart and rewrite it to match my updated writing style.

Unsheathed was one of the most beautiful projects that I have ever conceived and my older writing style didn't do it justice. Even if you were one of the earliest readers of my work, you'd really love what I am going to do with Subject 11 next.

Armageddon will continue in its own pace. I'll be publishing the next chapter the following weekend. Hoping to receive your continued patronage as I start posting new AU fics from March onwards.